

Church Building Consultation Service

Sixteenth Annual Report OF THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL BUREAU OF ARCHITECTURE

JANUARY 1950



A. H. FINK

*Religious Distinction with Economy
in Church Design*

"TO BEAUTIFY THE PLACE OF MY SANCTUARY" Isa 60:13

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BEFORE THE ARCHITECT COMES

“Don't appoint a Building Committee, yet.”

Before the architect is engaged, or definite decisions made regarding even the smallest building improvement, it is essential, for a successful outcome, to have at least the following done:

1. Have a conviction of the need.
2. Constitute the best kind of organization for study, building the program, financing, planning and construction.
3. Study the population by age groups, trends and the community; define the field of responsibility. Take note of other churches and institutions in the community. Study location and sites.
4. Study the activities and methods needed in Worship, Education, Fellowship and Service, Pastoral Work and Administration.
5. Prepare a statement of needed activities, classes and groups and the rooms and facilities needed for each. Write a building program so the architect will understand all of the requirements.
6. Study possible remodeling or enlarging of the existing building.
7. Describe and evaluate experiences of other church building projects.
8. Plan promotion, education, and preaching to secure united devoted support of the needed program.
9. Estimate the probable financial resources. Plan to make the financial program a means of spiritual growth.
10. Illustrate with lantern slides, blueprints, photographs, exhibits, various types of buildings, rooms and equipment.
11. Describe how to utilize space and rooms to best advantage, how to save costs by limiting ceiling heights, duplicating use of rooms, etc., how to build by units. Make a list of possible economies.
12. Write a check list so nothing desired will be omitted and so that changes will not be required after the building is started.
13. Select an architect and a builder.
14. Write a program of furnishings and equipment.

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL BUREAU OF ARCHITECTURE

JANUARY 22, 1950

At the annual meeting of the Home Missions Council, January 1934, the Church Building Committee which has been a very active agency through the years of the Council's history, established the Bureau of Architecture. Actual work was begun on June 1, 1934.

During the years, thousands of churches besides theological seminaries, pastors' convocations, denominational conferences and other groups, have received many types of service.

We hope that through the Bureau it has been demonstrated that much of our Protestant work can be conducted cooperatively. We do not find, as between denominations, any significant differences in requirements of church building, greater than those found within denominations.

It may be well at this stage in the history of the Bureau to assay its task and responsibilities in view of the overwhelming volume of Protestant church building, improvement and equipment planning, now in process. Our reviewing of church building plans through the past two years reveals the serious possibility that many of these building projects may be so inadequately and badly planned, that the programs of local churches, throughout coming generations, will suffer severe handicaps.

THE WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE BUREAU.

Although entitled a Bureau of Architecture, the work of the Bureau is that of Church Building Consultation, which is a very definite type of service and which, for effective church planning, must be carried forward well in advance of the work of the architect, as well as being continued coincidentally with his work.

We are greatly concerned that adequate and competent architectural service be available for church work, but at the moment there is even more a serious need for a wide extension of the professional service of Church Building Consultation.

The church building consultant must be thoroughly familiar with the seven-day-week working ministry needed at the church under consideration. He must also know what is practicable and wise respecting the work architecturally. He must be able to transmit to the architect in understandable language the requirements of the church in each individual instance. A consultant must understand how the needed church program must be developed with respect to population trends, financial resources, the need of the location or relocation and all the requirements as to floor spaces, ceiling heights, equipment and color schemes required in the seven-day-a-week ministries in worship, religious education, Christian fellowship and recreation, and in pastoral and administrative work: all of which must be stated in detail for approval by the church and submitted to the architect. In addition to the financial resources evident, one must know the possibility of developing the necessary spiritual resources to undergird the program.

The work of the Church Building Consultant includes assistance to the architect in such matters as lighting, air-conditioning, ventilation, heating, color and its influence in church work, etc., as all technical items in church work require treatment different from that in any other type of building.

The highly important matter of exterior design and the use of the arts allied in architecture must be influenced by the church, but in reasonable and intelligible terms such as will commend themselves to the architectural profession who are interested in church work.

EDUCATION AND PROMOTION

In order that the church constituency will become intelligently convinced regarding the necessity of the church building and its equipment in church work, the Bureau has realized a very definite responsibility in the field of promotion and education. This includes undertaking to help pastors and candidates for the ministry and lay leaders to learn

how to render effective leadership in programs for church building and in the use of the building. This does not mean helping pastors or laymen to draw plans or design buildings, but to be able to lead the building or improvement enterprise so that it will successfully be achieved in all respects and also so that the highest possible spiritual values will accrue through the whole enterprise.

PROMOTION OF THE PROTESTANT CHURCH BUILDING INTEREST THROUGH THE SECULAR PRESS:

We could keep one person fully occupied with the hundreds of opportunities of giving news items and other materials with a religious promotional value to the secular press. Recently the New York Times carried a story on church building and the work of the Bureau. Several magazines are now preparing articles on church building. Unfortunately much of this material will have a rather unhelpful character unless careful cooperation is given by religious leadership. Conferences on Church Architecture are given splendid newspaper publicity, often with illustrated stories. Visitations of the Director to local churches on Sundays and other days are usually written up by the local churches or city councils of churches. There have been many interviews with newspaper writers.

THE RELIGIOUS PRESS

More than 200 publications are available for material on every aspect of church planning and equipment and the allied arts. I propose that we assign to the several members of the Church Building Committee and enlist the help of others, subjects on which they might prepare articles for publication. Every year there is a new generation of pastors and lay officials in the churches and our work of education and promotion must be continuous in the religious press, in the architectural and allied arts professional press and in the secular press.

We could extend to very great detail the many items of activity and the interests involved in the work of church building consultation. American Protestantism should be greatly concerned about the appalling dearth of leadership in this field of professional service when in thousands of cases the

effectiveness of the whole work of Protestantism will be affected by the present unprecedented volume of church planning now under way and in prospect.

SOME ACTIVITIES OF THE BUREAU OF ARCHITECTURE DURING 1949.

Briefly listed, some of the services were:

Reviewing and writing comments on more than 300 sets of local church plans, forwarded by churches, denominational executives and architects.

The review of plans by the Bureau is made to study the provisions for the evidently needed program of the local church, with a view to financial resources and other considerations that should influence the building program. From the standpoint of the church work this review is usually very valuable. Some may think if an architect reviews the plans that is all that is needed in this area of work. Our architects are very busy and should not be expected to help assemble the specific program of religious education, recreation and other services required in each individual instance. Before reviewing the plans, a statement of needs and requirements is made, based upon information regarding population, membership and other items describing the local situation.

During the year, many architects have come at their own expense to our office for consultation regarding their plans.

VISITATION OF LOCAL CHURCHES

During the year, the policy of requesting a consultation service fee from churches visited, as well as a contribution toward travelling expenses, has been inaugurated. As far as we can determine, the churches requesting visits have readily acceded to this plan. It is of course impossible to visit nearly as many churches as are constantly requesting visits. In view of this policy however, we spend more time at the church and in preparing the report and assembling illustrative materials, outline plans, etc., which are sent to the church following a visit.

We are trying to be careful in this connection to serve the smaller churches as well as the larger, and frequently visit as many as five or six churches

during the one day, each of which receives a report of the visit. recommendations illustrative materials, etc.

Since we had made many advance commitments to visit churches before the policy was adopted at the last annual meeting, there were of course several churches visited during the year for which no consultation fee was requested. However, we did in most cases increase the amount asked for travel.

MATERIALS LOANED

Many collections of lantern slides, photographs, cuts for publicity work, books and illustrative materials have been loaned to churches. Exhibits have been displayed at theological seminaries, conferences, and other meetings and local churches.

VISITS TO THE OFFICE

It has been impossible to keep an account of the number of visitors to our office; pastors, building committees, laymen, architects, students, editors and others concerned in various ways with the church building interest.

Several conferences on church building and finance have been held in cooperation with City and State Councils of churches.

OVERSEAS SERVICE

Many orders of literature and materials have been sent overseas. The director is a member of the Committee On Christian Work on the Panama Canal Zone and has been called into consultation by the Japanese Christian University. A complete church building is included in their building program.

LITERATURE

We have collected during the year \$9,148.34 from the sale of literature. From the fact that many pieces of literature have a charge of only three cents, one can realize the tremendous volume of work this represents. In addition, thousands of pieces of literature for which no charge was made, have been sent out in the course of our correspondence and reports to local churches.

TELEPHONE CALLS

We receive innumerable telephone calls literally from every part of the United States. Here is a typical example — On a five days' trip to the Middle West, a pastor in a North Carolina town of 10,000 people kept trying to contact me, and finally on the fifth day reached me by telephone. He said that his church had decided to spend \$400,000 on a new building and wished me to come at the earliest possible date and at their complete expense to help select a site and and organize the congregation for the building enterprise. We realize the importance of spending more time in the office, but it seemed impossible to decline an invitation of this sort. I agreed to leave New York Saturday night, spend Sunday there, returning Monday morning.

A lawyer telephoned from a town in Mississippi, saying that their church is evenly divided on the question of remodeling their old building or to remove to a new site and erect a new plant, but the congregation agreed to base their decision upon my recommendation after a study on the ground. They readily agreed to wait three months for my visit.

Another thrilling call was from a church in Indiana where I had recommended that they abandon the proposed program to remodel an entirely inadequate and unsuitable building located in the downtown section. Three weeks later, the chairman of their board telephoned me to say that twelve men had pledged a half of a million dollars for a new building on a new location, site not yet selected, and that within two months they would have another half million pledged by the congregation.

THE SMALLEST CHURCH

Again we must emphasize the fact that the smallest church is very much on our mind and heart and we are continuously gathering outline plans from our consulting architects and from other architects to use in offering suggestions for individual problems of churches with memberships of less than 200. Complete construction drawings are available for some buildings, but the small church as well as the large one requires individual consideration.

THE OFFICE

In August we moved to new and larger quarters and have been able to display our literature and

other materials more effectively and to have interviews with building committees, pastors, and architects. We have a thoroughly splendid secretarial staff of three persons who work together in splendid harmony and with full evidence of vital personal interest in our very interesting work.

All of our work could be tremendously increased in every item of service, if we had an adequate staff and if we dared more generally to announce our available services among the churches.

OUR FINANCES

The operation of the Bureau during 1949 cost \$21,672.87 an infinitesimal percentage of the value of building projects aided, in addition to the cost of printing literature. This covered too, the cost of general promotional and liaison work, and included salaries, travel, office rent, postage, expressage, telephon, purchase of equipment and supplies, work by architects and blueprints.

\$14,117.50 was received from the Denominational boards directing and maintaining the Bureau.

\$3,493.17 was paid by local churches for visitation service fees and travel expense.

\$9,143.34 was received from the sales of literature.

\$257.00 from sales of blueprints, lantern slides, photos and other materials.

THE ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSION

A great deal of time has been given to visits to architects' offices and in reviewing information sent by them regarding their training, experience, church work and their current interest in doing church work. This is a continuous process. Confidential information regarding architects, contractors and craftsmen, is sent to the Board Executives.

During the past two years there has been a notable increase in requests from architects for our services direct to the architectural profession. However, there is a most serious dearth of architects competent and willing to do church work.

The architectural colleges give very little if any consideration to the work of the church. The present situation in architectural education is such that the work and needs of the church are simply not understood by those who are training our future architects. The architectural magazines give little or no

helpful service respecting church work. The church must become desperately concerned respecting architectural education. We would be aroused if materialists and secularists were employed to prepare our religious education texts and church music. The church is apparently only slightly concerned when rank materialism is expressed in the religious arts including architectural design. Unless the church becomes intelligently and effectively concerned in this field, future generations of reverent worshippers will have ground for complaint because of the lack of effective leadership in church architecture and the allied arts in our time.

THE CHURCH BUILDING COMMITTEE

The Church Building Committee of American Protestantism has of course many items of interest and responsibility in addition to the work of the Bureau of Architecture. The programs of the Committee meetings indicate the wide range of its concerns. One of the most urgent needs facing Protestantism is for more nearly adequate funds for the financial undergirding of newly established congregations of which hundreds are needed, as well as the financial aid needed due to changing populations and conditions affecting the responsibilities of thousands of existing churches. The financial need for church extension should be a concern of major importance to American Protestantism.

In the Church Building Committee, the most splendid fellowship and cooperative feeling is constantly experienced. It is a high privilege to be associated with such a group of church leaders. Two meetings of the Committee are held each year besides several meetings of sub-committees and of the Committee of Management of the Bureau of Architecture.

THE NORTH AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON CHURCH ARCHITECTURE AND THE CHURCH ARCHITECTURAL GUILD OF AMERICA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The Director is the Secretary of the North American Conference on Church Architecture, which, with the splendid aid of Dr. John R. Scotford, President, and other fine officers is conducting the conference at Columbus.

The Church Architectural Guild of America composed of architects, artists and craftsmen interested in church work, is doing a splendid service in the architectural profession. The Director is an Ex Officio member of the Executive Committee and a member of the Commission on Worship of the Federal Council of Churches. The Director is a member of the Committee on Church School Administration of the International Council of Religious Education. This Committee cooperated in the preparation of the very popular booklet, "The Church School and Parish House Building", the second edition of which is now being printed. Forty denominations cooperate in the work of the International Council. Work on the Committee on Church School Administration helps us to keep in close contact with the developments in this area. We are also in conference from time to time with denominational boards of Christian Education.

ELBERT M. CONOVER.

Distinction With Economy



FINK, Architect



It must look like a church — whatever the style



THOMAS, Architect

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION
Moose, Wyo.